



## **WOCA 'Step Away' from Abuse and Aggression Policy**

We at West Oxford Community Centre (WOCC) are here to provide the best services possible but in doing so we will not tolerate abusive or aggressive behaviour from our customers. We will look to refuse to deal with people who assault our staff or who continue to be abusive or aggressive when asked to behave reasonably.

This '**Step Away**' Policy and guidance is to help all our staff who may encounter abuse, aggression or even violence in the course of their duties. As you read this document have in mind WOCC is still 'a safe place to work', compared to many places.

### **Definitions**

We define abusive or aggressive behaviour as any behaviour which produces damaging or hurtful effects, physically or emotionally on other people. This definition is not exhaustive but would include:

- verbal abuse including name calling
- bullying, shouting or swearing
- threat of any of the above
- assault - resulting in injury or not
- assault using a weapon or other instrument including broken bottles, hypodermic needles etc.
- sexual assault
- injury caused by pets e.g. dogs
- threat of harm to property or family
- racial or sexual abuse

### **Commitment**

We are committed to minimising the risk of abuse and aggressive behaviour against our staff whilst acting in the course of their duties. It is recognised that in addition to any physical injury, the effect on mental well-being can be equally as serious.

### **We will:**

- Empower staff to be able to 'step away' from abuse or aggressive situations
- Provide skills training for volunteers, front line staff, and the Centre Manager to ensure that a consistent approach to dealing with abusive, violent or aggressive people is maintained and supported by this commitment and guidelines
- Carry out risk assessments for all vulnerable categories of front line jobs and introduce safe working practices and procedures to minimise the risks identified
- Require staff to report incidents and to monitor patterns and take steps to reduce risk
- Reinforce our support for staff who 'step away' from abuse and violence by signs and the inclusion of statements in appropriate correspondence and literature. Signs and statements will be balanced i.e. identifying the service customers can expect from WOCA and the response we expect from customers

**Trustees will:**

- Support this policy and the staff who apply it.
- Not be seen to support aggression when taking up complaints about WOCA staff.
- Reflect the requirement on the Centre Manager that the complainant should not receive special attention unless clearly warranted.
- Treat staff as they themselves wish to be treated.

**The Centre Manager will:**

- Be as supportive as possible of decisions taken by their staff in the first instance.
- Ensure they are in possession of all the facts when asked to intervene.
- Not ask for the complainant to receive special attention unless clearly warranted.
- Reassess the risks and control measures required, after incidents.
- Team brief and train staff, as required. Monitor the effectiveness of training.
- Be responsible for staff welfare, safety and support.

**Staff will:**

- Take all reasonable steps to ensure their own and their colleagues' health and safety.
- 'Step Away' from abuse and aggression as soon as practicable. Report incidents.
- Be alert to any escalating situation your colleagues may be dealing with. Be prepared to render help in any way it is safe to do so.
- Follow the guidance provided and participate in training given.

**Legal position**

Under the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 WOCA has a legal duty to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare at work of its employees.

This policy and guidance aims to meet the objectives set out in WOCA's Health & Safety Policy. Particular attention is paid in this document to the provision of systems of work, and a working environment, that is safe and without risks to health. Within this framework WOCA affirms its intention to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health and safety of its employees against abuse and violence arising from or during the course of their work activities.

September 2015